

“Why God’s Ordained Authority is so Important” Part 4 - 1 Corinthians 11:13-16 – October 11th, 2015

- Today’s teaching will be part four of a series titled, “Why God’s Ordained Authority is so Important.”
- I have to confess that I wasn’t looking forward to teaching through this chapter because of the gnarly nature of what Paul writes.
- However, as we’re navigating our way through it, I’m finding that the truths woven into the fabric of this chapter are invaluable.
- One of the reasons the truths are so valuable is that this provides us a much-needed reminder of God’s structure of authority.
- While this ordained structure of authority is supremely related in the context of the church, it also applies to every arena of life.
- Whether it’s in the church, in the home, or in the workplace, God has set in place by divine design, an ordained order as it were.
- The reason the Corinthian’s were having so many problems was because they were out of order as it relates to this principle.
- More specifically, the women were rebelling against man’s authority by deliberately refusing to wear a head covering in church.
- As such, Paul addresses this by explaining to them how important it is to submit oneself to the authority God placed over them.

1. Jesus exemplified submission to the Father’s authority (Verses 1-3)

- Paul says follow my example as I follow Christ - the head of man is Christ, the head of woman is man the head of Christ is God.

2. When we disrespect authority we dishonor God (Verses 4-7)

- Here Paul contrasts men and women with their heads either covered or uncovered and why it is that it can become a dishonor.

3. Being under authority is not synonymous with inferiority (Verses 8-12)

- Paul explains that God’s authority structure is such that both men and women are dependent on each other and as such equal.

4. The very nature of things proves God’s order of authority (Verses 13-16)

13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

- v13 Paul tells them to judge this for themselves then asks, is it proper for a woman to pray to God while her head is uncovered?
- v14-15 He asks, doesn’t the very nature of things teach it’s a disgrace for a man to have long hair but for a woman it’s her glory?
- v16 He then says if anyone wants to be contentious about this, neither he nor the churches of God wish to get into an argument.

- Once again, I need to emphasize that the matter of hair length on a man does not have application to us in our culture today.
- This because, in both the Jewish and Greek cultures of that day, long hair on a man was seen as a shameful sign of femininity.
- It’s been said, “It’s better for preachers to be concerned about the length of their sermons instead of the length of people’s hair.”

- Be that as it may, the point Paul is trying to get across here is the very nature of things in fact proves God’s order of authority.
- In other words, naturally, a woman’s hair is longer than man’s, which is evidence of the woman’s long hair being her covering.
- I suppose Paul is referring to the long hair of the woman as a “nature’s veil,” of sorts, in the sense that it’s the natural order.

- Perhaps you’ll indulge me for the remainder of this teaching as I refocus our attention on what I see as the bigger issue at hand.
- Notice in verse 16, that Paul says if anyone wants to be contentious about this, they need to stop so as to not create divisions.
- To me, this seems to indicate that the matter of women covering their head in church had become a very legalistic contention.

One commentator puts this into perspective this way, “Paul is saying, ‘If this discussion concerning head covering causes problems or division, it’s not worth becoming legalistic.’ The key to good theology is to note how many times a particular subject is dealt with in Scripture. As opposed to subjects like the finished work of the Cross and the importance of love, this is the only time the subject of head covering is seen in all of Scripture, and thus should be given proportionate attention.”

- If you were to ask me what I thought was the most destructive dynamic in a church it would have to be the sowing of discord.
- So much so that the discord and division that always ensues, supersedes the issue that started the problem in the first place.
- Such case with the Corinthian church, such that division over head covering was a bigger problem than the head covering itself.

It was Winston Churchill who famously said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” While Churchill’s intentions were noble, this quote has been exported for evil purposes, especially when it comes to the devil’s devices. By that I mean the devil will never let a crisis in the church go to waste because he can turn it into a device to dismantle and destroy a church.

Proverbs 6:12–9 (NKJV) — 12 A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth; 13 He winks with his eyes, He shuffles his feet, He points with his fingers; 14 Perversity is in his heart, He devises evil continually, He sows discord. 15 Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; Suddenly he shall be broken without remedy. 16 These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

- This begs the question of could it be that this is why the sowing of discord among the brethren is such an abomination to God?
- I would answer yes! Sadly, there is many a church today, like the church in Corinth that has cooperated with the devil in this.
- What’s interesting is, next week, we’ll talk about why the communion table is so important, which was another source of conflict.